



Improving Neighborhoods Through a Partnership Program

Lublin, Poland

Background

Polish cities have suffered from extreme neglect and decapitalization for over 40 years. The social and economic policies of the communist regime created disincentives for residents to improve their homes and neighborhoods. To counter the continuing deterioration of low-income neighborhoods and involve residents in improving their neighborhoods and homes, the City of Lublin (population 360,000) wanted to implement a realistic upgrading and revitalization strategy. The city decided, as a neighborhood development strategy, to create public/private partnerships that would plan, implement, and finance the rehabilitation of deteriorated neighborhoods. Lublin hoped that such partnerships would increase the rehabilitation of dwellings by the private sector and encourage private sector participation in the rehabilitation of city administered housing stock.

Innovation

The city decided to test the concept of creating neighborhood/city partnerships to plan, implement, and finance the rehabilitation of deteriorated neighborhoods. It concluded that the development of a participatory planning process involving the city, citizens, NGOs, and businesses in the community was key to the success of the initiative. Two older deteriorated neighborhoods dating from the 19th century with a mix of single and multi-family units, some of which were illegally built, were selected as demonstration sites. Because these neighborhoods had been selected for redevelopment, they had been denied access to infrastructure. To work around the hierarchical structure of the Lublin government, the city created interdepartmental teams to develop an interdisciplinary approach to neighborhood revitalization. During a two year planning and outreach period, the interdepartmental teams engaged residents in planning infrastructure improvements that would be financed through a cost sharing formula with the city. The municipality covered 50 percent of the cost of water, sewer, and power lines; 70 percent of the cost of roads and sidewalks; and 100 percent of the cost of drainage and street paving. As the planning evolved, the city came to realize that it was important to obtain the support of local businesses. As a result the Polish Opportunities Industrial Center, the Lublin Development Foundation, and the City Department of Promotion were invited to participate in planning discussions.

Results

Water, sewer, and gas lines were installed in various streets with organizational and financial participation of the residents. In the two pilot neighborhoods, 137 housing units were rehabilitated. Almost 50 new micro-enterprises employing 120 persons began operating. The initiative showed that participatory planning and community based development processes could result in improved neighborhoods and substantial private investment. This innovation convinced city officials and neighborhood residents that by working together they could rejuvenate poor neighborhoods. The neighborhood partnership concept is now being expanded to housing rehabilitation in Lublin's Old Town. A report and case study have been prepared on the process of organizing the neighborhood associations and the interdepartmental team and designing and implementing the demonstration.

Summary

To counter deterioration and involve residents in improving their neighborhoods and homes, the City of Lublin created public/private partnerships that planned, implemented, and financed the rehabilitation of two deteriorated neighborhoods. Water, sewer, and gas lines were installed; 137 housing units were rehabilitated; and almost 50 new micro-enterprises began operating.

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